

Having just recently formed a new centrist political party, Kadima (Forward), Sharon's popularity in the Israeli public has initially catapulted it in the polls to the top of the March 28 scheduled elections with 40 representatives in Israel's 120 seat Knesset (Parliament). It is doubtful now that presumably in Sharon's absence of active participation, Kadima will muster such commanding influence.

This reality allows the Likkud party, created by Sharon back in 1973 and decimated by his defection due to its hard-line vis-à-vis the Palestinians and Sharon's changed posture, to reemerge as a potent power under Netanyahu's present leadership. The door has also been opened to potential gains by Labor with its head and rising star, Peretz, who defeated long-enduring Peres.

An unsettled and unsettling Israeli scene is bound to have repercussions, at least temporarily, for the peace process which has finally gathered momentum given the disengagement from Gaza and the northern West Bank. A breakthrough move masterminded by Sharon's single-mindedness and quite smoothly facilitated with the aid of Israel's responsive democracy. The Palestinians and Arab rejectionists might be tempted to take advantage of the temporary vacuum left by Sharon though the government is fully functioning, and test the waters, inviting increased tension in a volatile context.

Sharon's lasting legacy which can not be denied nor hopefully diminished but only enhanced, is his crowning and courageous transformation from a right winger vehemently opposed to Rabin's Oslo initiative to a responsible leader who upon becoming Prime Minister painfully appreciated the need for a peaceful Palestinian state next to a secure Israel. I recall being in Sharon's company years ago when as the architect of West Bank settlements, he zealously displayed dotted maps. Thus his radically revised course was met with disbelief and hostility by long time friends and supporters, turning him into possibly the most guarded man on earth, traveling by helicopter rather than car.

I will cherish my memorable encounter with Sharon in December 2000 in Jerusalem, exactly two months before first elected Prime Minister. It was during a solidarity mission following the outbreak of the Second Intifada, triggered by Sharon's explosive visit to the Temple Mount and his nemesis Arafat taking advantage of it, unleashing unremitting violence against Israeli citizens while denying former Prime Minister Barak's far-reaching negotiating concessions. I found Sharon approaching my row and seating next to me. He was chairman of the Likkud and I saw no bodyguards around him. After he addressed our delegation I had the gumption to ask him if he would had visited the Temple Mount had he known how the Palestinians would exploit it. He simply responded, "They always have excuses." He did express sympathy for the Palestinians' plight. His searching eyes of down-to-earth humanity yet steeled determination will remain with me.

Just like Rabin the General he too was transformed into both visionary and realist, struggling for that elusive yet essential peace. A war hero who was badly wounded in Israel's 1948 War of Independence and distinguished himself in the 1967 and 1973 wars, he was deeply disappointed when not appointed the military chief of staff. Sharon received a black eye from the official inquiry commission following the tragic events of the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps during the 1982 war in Lebanon. Consequently he was forced to resign from his Defense Minister post with a bleak public future. He also experienced family adversity, losing two wives and an eleven year old son killed in a gun accident.

A colorful man of charisma and charm, conflict and controversy, Sharon nonetheless succeeded in gaining his nation's confidence as Prime Minister due in large measure to Palestinian terror and his tough aura though his response to Palestinian provocation of suicide bombings has been quite cautious, partly because, I believe, of his desire to rehabilitate his past tarnished image. His insistence on erecting the security-barrier in face of outside opposition substantially reduced terrorist attacks. Nicknamed the "bulldozer" who does not stop at a red light with negative and positive attributes, he proved to be "the comeback kid" exhibiting remarkable skills in Israel's political minefield.

The last of Israel's grandfatherly figures inspiring awe, turning from politician into statesman, he enjoys a close working relationship with President Bush who highly values his Israeli partner in pursuit of common goals in a terrorism threatened world. However, the basic bond between the two intimately linked allied countries will persist with whoever is Israel's leader or America's. Even as we pray for Sharon's well-being we traumatically learned of the fateful impact one man with a crushing burden of duty can make, and of the human boundaries of even great historical personalities. In health and sickness, Sharon has come to symbolize an embattled Israel on the fronts of war and peace fighting to prevail.

HONORING JAMES E. PFEIFFER

HON. LYNN C. WOOLSEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 7, 2006

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor James E. Pfeiffer of Sausalito, California, who died January 14, 2006, while hiking on the Marin County trails that he loved. Jim will be remembered for his contributions to his community and the youth of California as well as for the leadership he provided to the Foundation of the State Bar of California.

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1945, Jim earned a B.A. from Wesleyan College in Iowa and an M.A. from George Washington University in Washington, DC. He worked for the YMCA in New York and Connecticut before relocating to California in 1976 as Program Director of the Sonoma County YMCA.

Jim also served stints at the YMCA in Los Gatos, the Diocese of San Jose, the Japanese American Community Center, and the Charles Armstrong School, before becoming the first Director of the Foundation of the State Bar of California upon its establishment in 1990. He later became its first employee as well as continuing to manage a volunteer board of directors.

Founded to fund law-related education and public service and to provide scholarships to law students, the organization under Jim's leadership raised corporate sponsorships of several hundred thousand dollars per year. Due to his guidance, it now supports the development and promotion of peer courts for first-time youthful offenders who commit a misdemeanor; awards 40 grants annually to causes such as "Kids in the Law" and "When You're Over 18" publications; and offers scholarships and internships to applicants from all over the State.

Jim also spearheaded the creation of the Legal Heritage Institute which sends a high

school student to Sacramento for a week to experience the courts and legal issues in the Capitol and for several years served as executive director of the California Supreme Court Historical Society where he focused on the recovery and promotion of the State's judicial history. He retired from the foundation in 2003 due to advancing Parkinson's disease.

Jim's community service includes volunteering as lay eucharistic minister for the San Quentin Prison Ministry, developing and guiding historical walking tours of San Rafael for the Marin Historical Society, and working with youth as recreation director for St. Andrew Church in Marin City's Vacation Bible School. He also walked precincts for political candidates Faye d'Opal, Sharon Jackson, and John Kerry. And Jim was a great supporter of mine.

Mr. Speaker, James Pfeiffer will be sorely missed by his many friends and colleagues and especially by his devoted wife, Bonnie Hough. His courage, spirit, and warmth were an inspiration to all of us who knew him and are a continual reminder not only of what we have lost, but also of what we can achieve.

CONGRATULATIONS TO HOWARD
FRIEDMAN

HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 7, 2006

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, it is with great honor that I rise today to congratulate Howard Friedman on becoming the new President of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, AIPAC. Howard Friedman is one of the most dedicated and talented individuals I know, and AIPAC will be in good hands under his leadership.

Howard is a resident of Baltimore. He also is the Managing Partner of Lanx Capital, a hedge fund advisory firm, and is the co-founder and Vice Chairman of Circa Group, an investment group. In addition to his success in the business world, Howard has a long-standing commitment to Jewish communal affairs. He has served as the Campaign Chairman of the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore and as President of the Baltimore Jewish Council. He also serves on numerous boards, including 1st Mariner Bank, AIPAC and Sinai Hospital.

In assuming the helm of AIPAC, Howard knows these are difficult times for Israel and the peace process. But he also knows that Israel is an island of democracy and freedom in a sea of totalitarian, repressive regimes. As the President of AIPAC, Howard will work to continue to strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship. Israel is the only Western democracy in the Middle East and it's vital that our bond remains unshakable.

The enemies of Israel are strong, and AIPAC is an important ally in combating those who seek the destruction of Israel.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives to congratulate Howard Friedman on his new role as President of AIPAC, and affirm our support for the State of Israel.